Tyler Brown

FIAE Ch 7,8,9,10

* The relative nature of grades
* What about effort and attendance?
* What to avoid when differentiation assessment
  + Avoid incorporating non-academic factors
  + Avoid penalizing students for multiple attempts at mastery
  + Avoid assessing students in ways that do not indicate their mastery
* When do allow redo’s

Wormeli covers many of the common errors teachers tend to make regarding assessment in Chapters 7-10 of FIAE. First, he discusses the nature of grading and both sides of the argument about whether or not grading is really an effective and healthy way of reinforcing and interpreting students’ mastery. Personally, I support a system free of arbitrary letters and numbers that don’t really detail individual growth and achievement. On the other hand, I can instantly recognize what an uproar an announcement like that would make when told to a group of students, teachers, and administrators who have been socialized by the grading system, in most cases, for the majority of their lives. In my Practicum experience, I have noticed that when leading in-class activities, the question of “are we being graded on this?” is asked all too often.

There seems to be no safe response. I tried explaining to one class that it is not being graded, but participation will help them learn the material that they will eventually be tested on. One student, who I will call J, openly responded with “sweet well I’ll just wait for the study guide Mr. Main gives us before the test because I really don’t feel like doing anything today”. Looking around the room, a few smirks, stifled laughs, and nods of the head allowed me to understand that some of the students agreed with this notion. So given that information I posed the question “so what you are saying J, is that grading you on this activity somehow is the only thing that would get you to participate?” to which he replied with something along the lines of: “yeah, because we are here to take classes, earn grades, and get the hell out of here as fast as possible. That’s it”. I wasn’t really sure how to respond, so I said, “Okay J, I’ll let you watch the rest of us do the activity, and if you decide by the end of the class that it’s boring just sitting at your desk watching, let me know and we will work you into the activity.” 20 minutes later, the class had been separated into two teams and we were in the midst of playing “trashketball” while covering the content in Unit 17.1. After all of the students had a chance to take a shot, I stopped and said “Blue team, you are short one player on your roster, is it alright if J joins your team?” They agreed that would be okay, and without having to put J on the spot, he was socially reinforced to take a shot, which he made, and answer a 3-point question, which he knew the answer to. I was thankful that it ended that way, because a variety of other endings to that story could have occurred. J could have been more defiant and still refused to participate. He might have gotten angry that I didn’t ask him directly whether or not he wanted to join in.

To me, grading and assessment is perhaps the most mind-boggling aspect of education. The only real universal truth about grading seems to be that: what to grade, when to grade, and how to grade, along with the hundreds of unique considerations that branch off of those questions, must all be decided with respect to the content, the unique personality of the class, and the unique personality of each individual student within it.